NEWSWEEK
DEC 27 1965

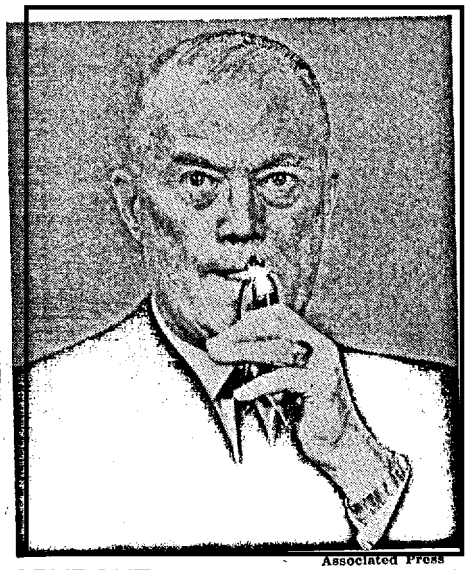
[redacted]

CIA:

Leaky Ship

He looked like a natural when, a scant eight months ago, he moved into the seventh-floor director's office at the Pickle Works—the trade name for the Central Intelligence Agency's sepulchral, granite-gray headquarters in Langley, Va. When LBJ first piped retired Vice Adm. William F. (Red) Raborn Jr. aboard as the nation's spymaster, the first reaction among the startled handicappers was: Admiral who? But even a cursory riffle through his resumé yielded the impressive answers. Raborn, 65, was an authentic World War II hero (as a carrier officer in the Pacific), a go-go executive (as managerial mastermind of the Navy's Polaris missile program), a captain of industry (as an Aerojet-General Corp. vice president), a big, bluff, hearty man who could at once run the business of espionage and keep Congress happy.

Raborn sailed into Langley, on that record, in a honeymoon glow—and soon found himself the protagonist in an increasingly sharp family quarrel. The mood at the Pickle Works went quickly sour, and, with it, Raborn's notices. Conflicting tales leaked out of Langley, where the motto chiseled in the marble says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth, some CIA pros insisted, was that



Associated Press

Raborn: At sea at the Pickle Works?

the admiral was a tough, purposeful and promising boss. But others dissented. Red Raborn, they said, was a greenhorn at the spy game; he was insensitive to the professional pride of his staffers, inept at dealing in nuances, so unlettered in international politics, indeed, that he could not pronounce or even remember the names of some foreign capitals and chiefs of state.

And that, the dissenters said, has put the CIA at a corporate disadvantage in the jealousy-ridden jungle optimistically called "the intelligence community." In theory, that community is an interlocking set of nine agencies, each pursuing its separate, defined tasks, all watched over by the CIA chief as board chairman. In fact, spying is an overlapping and highly competitive business, with each agency keeping a chary eye on its potential rivals for territory, money and power. The rival that CIA staffers watch hardest these days is the Pentagon's aggressive, burgeoning Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), formed four years

Continued

ago out of a merger of the intelligence arms of the separate services. What troubles some topsiders at Langley is the fear that their man Raborn is simply outclassed in top-policy councils by the Pentagon's Robert McNamara. LBJ has unbounded faith in his Defense Secretary; he has scarcely seen Raborn at all, insiders say, since his gall-bladder operation last October. Says one dour CIA man: "It's no match."

The professional complaints are partly the predictable fallout over LBJ's choice of a nonprofessional—and a brusque Navy man at that. Old CIA hands felt the agency had come of age in the eighteen years since its birth, that the time had come to stop bringing in prestigious outsiders like John A. McCone and pick an in-house man—someone like, say, veteran cloak-and-dagger pro Richard Helms. But Mr. Johnson had his politically seasoned eye on a Congress increasingly conscious—and critical—of the CIA. He moved Helms up to the assistant helmsman post of deputy director, but called in Raborn—a past master at dealing with Congress from the Polaris days—as a sort of caretaker for a year or two.

Rocking the Boat: The command inherited by the bluff old sailor was a thoroughly professional outfit grown somewhat set in its bureaucratic ways, and Raborn lost no time rocking the boat. He moved in, said one staffer, "like he was trying to develop the Polaris"—showing up at the office at 5 a.m., finishing his reading by the time the first aides arrived at 8:30, dressing down subordinates in salty Navy lingo as a matter of almost daily routine. "When you walk down that hall," he told startled staffers, "I want to see the wind move." Once, so the story goes, he read a news story about a revolution brewing in Small Country X, routed the desk officer involved out of bed with a late-night phone call and demanded a full report. The admiral got a quick fill-in, then gruffed: "And what the hell are you doing about it?" The officer groused later: "He just doesn't seem to understand that we aren't running all these little countries around the world."

Others told in dismay of seeming gaps in the knowledge Raborn brings to his supersensitive job. At one staff conference, a well-placed source said, the admiral interrupted his briefing officers to ask the meaning of the word "oligarchy." "Jesus," one sputtered afterward, "if he doesn't know what an oligarchy is, how can he handle about two-thirds of the countries we deal with?"

Mangler: There were stories of urgent conferences suddenly untracked as Raborn dilated at length on how he took over the Polaris project in 1955 and delivered the missile three years ahead of schedule, in 1960. Still others are irked by the way the admiral handles CIA analyses put together with loving care for every complexity, every semantic shading. "All this is lost when Red reports to the National Security Council," one beefed. "He really mangles them."

Because secrecy is his business, the admiral is handicapped in counterposing a record of public achievement. Raborn could not so much as protest when critics charged him with overplaying the case for intervention in the Dominican Republic on his very first day in office; not until later did the story get out that LBJ had decided on the action before he even talked to Raborn. When even-handed Washington columnist Joseph Kraft broke the story of CIA's morale problems last month, Raborn was clearly angered. "The security boys," one insider said, "were running up and down the halls trying to find out who knew Kraft." But, once again, there could be no public retort. The CIA, indeed, hasn't even had a press agent since September, when it abolished the job of assistant to the director for public affairs on the ground that "we have no public affairs."

'Horse Sense': Thus, Raborn's assets tend to go unrecorded except in the shop talk of those CIA men who remain his admirers. One plus is a jovial manner that seems unfailingly to please important foreign guests during golf matches at Burning Tree (though Raborn's game is generally so bad that even those visitors who choose to lose for tactical reasons have trouble doing so). Others tell of other virtues. "He's got guts," says one. "If he's convinced he needs more money or people to do what the President has asked him to do, he'll take on the whole Budget Bureau singlehanded." Adds another: "He may not speak the Queen's English, but once you explain an operation, he's got a hell of a lot of horse sense about it."

Yet morale at the Pickle Works has unquestionably sagged. Under Raborn, some contemplate a day when McNamara's DIA will effectively monopolize the undercover spy business while the CIA supervises nothing more than overt intelligence—argot for material that appears in public print. The CIA dissenters feel doubly handicapped at the very time when the two agencies are racing for an answer to the No. 1 intelligence question of the day: whether or not Red China will intervene in the war in Vietnam. Gloomily recalling an old agency saying that Allen Dulles ran a happy ship and John McCone a taut ship, one CIA man added the postscript: "Raborn's running a sinking ship." He was, in all likelihood, stretching a metaphor—but the important fact was that some CIA men believe it and were moved to say so. Sinking or not, Admiral Raborn's ship of state secrets had, if nothing else, sprung some damaging leaks.